

ILLAWARRA HOSPITAL OPENING – (COLEDALE 1917)

On Saturday afternoon this latest addition to the hospitals of Illawarra, a mark of industrial growth in the northern part, was ceremoniously opened. The day was one of the pleasantest, and the gathering was a representative one. Mr. J. D. Fitzgerald, the Health Minister, had been invited for the function, but an apology stating unavailable absence, was received from him. The president, Mr. A. Morrison opened the proceedings, and introduced Mr. G. M. Burns, M.H.R. who, in a few words of commendation, declared the institution ready for business.

Mr. H. MIDGLEY, J.P., secretary, said he had been given the task by the president of proving to them it was not the fault of the committee that this institution was not opened some considerable time ago. He could not do better than start at the commencement of the movement: In August, 1910, the first committee sat. The movement originated with the medical committee of the North Bulli Colliery, about July, 1910. The committee at that time was very strong; every branch of the officials was represented on it. They issued invitations to other collieries asking for delegates to a meeting; two representatives come from the Scarborough Tunnel, two each from South Clifton, and Coalcliff. They met at Coledale, and decided that a hospital was absolutely necessary. A few accidents, which were taking attention then, had occurred, and owing to the long distance the cases had to be taken to a hospital, this movement was started. After the delegates had consulted they called meetings at Coledale, Scarborough, and Clifton, and at all these meetings the resolutions of the delegate conference were confirmed, also the selection of delegates to form the building committee.

The first meeting of the building committee was held in Scarborough on 10th August, 1910. That was the real start. It might be interesting to some of them to give the names of that committee: they were: North Bulli and Coledale, R. Waters, R. Fullagar, H. A. Midgley: New Tunnel, J. Curtis, H. Luck, T. Waters: South Clifton: N. Smith, E. Jackson, G. Naylor: Coalcliff, Aylward, T. Smith: Scarborough, J. Usher; Clifton, G. T. Alcorn, M. Tarpy.

Only two of these were still on the committee, and had been active members; these were Mr. Smith, of Clifton, and himself. This was to him a very proud day; he was very pleased to see the work they had started so long ago carried out so successfully.

Later on, the committee accepted an offer to give the ground the institution is on from Dr. Dixon (applause). The committee thought the ground not quite sufficient, and they proposed to purchase a block extending to the railway. Eventually they got an offer of two acres for £50, it was left to himself, and he got the owners to promise a donation of £10.

The next movement was a recommendation from the committee to the colliery lodges that one day's pay be contributed. This was approved by all the collieries, and it was carried out to some extent. The North Bulli colliery officials were in full sympathy and they worked hard and got from the colliery £214. The others did not do quite so well; Coalcliff got £19, the Tunnel £21 South Clifton £82. Allowance had to be made for these not being equal to North Bulli, the officials there took up the collection, they did not do so at the others; at Coalcliff 59 underground workers promised to give a day's pay, and of the surface hands 72 out of 76 promised a half day's pay; the small amount obtained was not the fault of the men, it was impossible to collect. The Tunnel at that time had only 60 or 70 employees. The next was a concert in Scarborough, from which they received £3 4s. In 1912 a bazaar was held from which was got £133, and in the same year Kembla Grange Race Club gave them a benefit the result of which was £64.

The president has asked him to try and prove it was not the committee's fault the institution was not opened earlier. In 1912 the Board of Health sent Dr. Willis to inspect the site, and he reported against it. That was the first knock-back they got. The committee met and were just as determined as ever that the hospital would be built: he was instructed to obtain an appointment for a deputation and after some time they met the Chief Secretary, and opposed Dr Willis. When he opened the bazaar at Scarborough the Chief Secretary viewed the site and said it could not be beat in N.S.W. Previous to that, the committee thought a cottage hospital to cost about £2000 was about the limit they could do, but Mr. Flowers said, "I will build an institution which will meet the needs of the district for the next 30 years." The Committee mentioned about money; Mr. Flowers said, "Don't trouble about that now." And the result was he carried out his promise. The building was completed and handed over to this committee in October, 1915. Previous to that they had approached Mr. Flowers about furniture, When Mr. Black came to open the bazaar at Coledale he definitely promised them they would have the amount for the furniture. The cost of the furniture sent down by the department was £800, and £200 allowed for the operating room, which had pretty nearly all come. The cost of the building was between £7000 and £8000.

Now, towards that the public had contributed £1100, toward the building the Government had given £5000 and they spent £7000. Towards the furnishing the Government had received £300. For about 15 months they had had a wardsman at a cost of about £2 10s per week, that had been eating away the funds. There had been a contributory fund running at the same time and the total receipts of that was £944. The account at last date was £265 in credit. It was proposed to issue a financial statement showing particulars of receipts and expenditure.

Mr. Burns had mentioned the lack of a hot water installation and a sterilising plant. They had been at the Government to provide that and he thought they were successful.

Mr. Midgley read a list of apologies from persons invited, remarking appreciatively one from Mr. W. Plowman, sen. (Austinmer), enclosing a cheque for £1 1s; Mrs. Plowman, he said, had been a help in various functions.

The Coledale Band at intervals enlivened the proceedings here.

After the opening ceremony an adjournment was made to the Empire Hall, where brief addresses were delivered by Dr. Featherstone, Crs. Carrick, Miller and Ricket, and Messrs. R. Grills, P. Murphy and H. A. Midgley. All the speakers referred to the urgent needs there was at that end of the district for a hospital such as had been officially opened that afternoon. Refreshments were then provided.

In the evening a social was held, when the attendance was large. The music was supplied by Messrs. G. Scrivener and J. Hewitt, while a couple of extras were kindly contributed by Mrs. A. J. Miller, Messrs. F. Smith, and R. McCombie acted as Ms. C., and all present expressed themselves as having spent a very enjoyable evening.

The hospital, which is on a commanding site, fronting the main road, comprises four houses. There are 15 beds and four cots and a emergency 21 beds can be provided. So far, a matron (Miss Chalmers), has been appointed. It was expected that the institution would be ready for patients in a week or so.

- Courtesy "S. C. Times" March 1917.